

Counter-Spy: From Obscurity to Top Attention

By Ron Shaffer

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For nearly three years a group of young Washingtonians have been laboring in obscurity, putting out a magazine from a basement in the Adams-Morgan section of the city, trying to convince the American public that the CIA is evil.

Now this group, which calls itself the Fifth Estate, is reaching audiences as never before because, ironically, the CIA has so bitterly denounced it.

"It looks like the CIA has made us famous," said Fifth Estate member Winslow Peck, more with incredulity than glee. "Instead of us fingering them, the CIA has fingered us."

Peck and his colleagues, a collection of a half-dozen former antiwar activists and college dropouts in their 20s, have been catapulted into public attention because the CIA has claimed the group is responsible, at least indirectly, for the assassination of CIA station chief Richard S. Welch in Greece on Dec. 23.

The CIA has charged that by naming Welch as a CIA operative in their magazine, Counter-Spy, the Fifth Estate contributed to his death.

They have been on the Today Show, major national radio and television networks and they have been interviewed by the country's major newspapers.

"Basically, we're out to burst the bubble on James Bond," said Tim Butz, one of the leaders of the group.

For too long, he said, Americans have held the CIA as some sort of mysterious entity that should not be challenged. "People sort of thought of it like God—it's too big to understand," said Eda Gorden, another Fifth Estate member.

So what their organization is trying to do, Butz said, is provide hitherto unknown information about national security agencies and the criminal justice system in general, and about the CIA in particular.

Fifth Estate was launched by author Norman Mailer, who envisioned forming "something equivalent to Nader's Raiders... an ombudsman composed of literary, scholarly and detective minds... to avert the country's slide into totalitarianism."

Peck, Butz and others, involved in various antiwar efforts in Washington, had the same idea, and they merged into the Fifth Estate, with Mailer supplying the bankroll.

Counter-Spy has a circulation of about 3,000.

Butz, Peck, Gorden and four other "coeditors," whose interests ran from Attica to Wounded Knee, put out Counter-Spy. They operate on a \$20,000 a year budget financed through subscriptions and donations.

They volunteer their time for the Fifth Estate, Butz said, and survive by working part-time in such jobs as bartending and free-lance research. Butz attends school on the GI Bill.

Butz, 28, served in Vietnam in the Air Force in 1966 and subsequently entered Kent State University in Ohio as a journalism student. It was there, he said, that he became active in the antiwar movement.

Porter, a journalism school dropout, wrote stories on San Diego financier C. Arnholt Smith in an alternative paper there long before Smith was indicted.

Margaret Van Houten, 28, who worked her way through the State University of New York at Buffalo as a sociology major, then became enraged over the uprising at Attica, found her way to Washington and the now heads a prison reform study group for the Fifth Estate.

They function as coeditors of the magazine, drawing editorial contributions from 220



By Joa Heiberger—The Washington Post

Tim Butz, Eda Gorden and Winslow Peck, with controversial Counter-Spy magazine

"associates" scattered around the country. Because these coeditors fear reprisals, and because they operate on a shoestring budget, they move around with no fixed address, working out of a post office box number, taking phone calls at various offices of groups friendly to them.

For Gorden, "awakening" did not come until later in her life. She graduated in journalism from Simmons College in Boston and began work as a senior editor for the American Trial Lawyers Association.

One day, she said, "I began

to see some contradictions in the positions I was raising," and she was off to found the Coalition to End Grand Jury Abuse. From there she went to South Dakota to help in the defense of American Indian Movement leaders.

Then there is Julie Brooks, 21, a former editor of the University of Wisconsin student newspaper, who left school to join Counter-Spy; Peck, 29, a former analyst for the National Security Agency who took up antiwar politics; Harvey Kahn, 24, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin

an antiwar activist who taught school in Mexico for a while before joining the Fifth Estate.

The group works with an advisory board of former government employees and libertarians, including such New Left activists as David Dellinger and William Kunstler, compiling research and making appearances when they can.

Butz and Gorden said they first heard of Richard Welch's death on the night of Dec. 23 when a New York Times reporter called them.